

Dear Neighbors,

A recent notice was sent out to our area neighbors by SLO County re: a conditional use permit we recently applied for at the La Lomita Ranch. We've seen some dialogue exchanged through the neighbor forum about the notice, and the concerns rightfully expressed by neighbors, as everyone tries to learn more about our permit request. The county's attempt to 'short hand' 47 pages of an application into a post card is a difficult task and actually results in more questions than it does answers.

Please allow us to provide you a brief background about ourselves, the La Lomita Ranch, and the intended use of the conditional use permit we're applying for. Also, to maybe dispel some rumors or false assumptions being circulated.

My wife Rebecca, myself (Alan), and our 5 children (ages 9-17) have owned La Lomita Ranch for about 5 years. I am a 90s Cal Poly graduate of Ag Business & Dairy Science, and my wife is a part time art teacher at Mission Prep. We live here on the ranch, and all our children attend local SLO schools. We are NOT land developers. We are local ranchers who live here full time and who are very much a part of the SLO community in so many ways. We are both project leaders for Edna Valley 4-H and especially enjoy working with youth in teaching them about agriculture.

As agriculturists, I guess you can say our family has always been in the 'neighbor business' for over 25 years. During this time, we've always gone to great lengths to become a DESIRED neighbor, not a 'bad neighbor'. In turn, we've always hoped for the same in return from our neighbors. When Bunyan Bros was proposing a composting facility on the nearby Perozzi property, I was an outspoken opponent at the Planning Commission, as some of you may remember. My stance was that as land owners, ranchers have a returned ethical responsibility to the community for smart uses of our land resources. A compost yard near town certainly didn't represent a smart, responsible use. This same belief is how we ourselves intend to use our land: Smart & Responsibly.

When we returned to the SLO area 5 years ago, it was our desire not only to reside here, but to bring VALUE back to this community in a way we knew best. Ironically, as land owners, one of best ways we know how to bring value is to protect, beautify, and improve our immediate surroundings for the enjoyment by

others, and especially those areas most visible to our neighbors, the community, and by out of town guests. In the immediate neighborhood of Orcutt Rd, we hope we've accomplished some of that with new wood fencing constructed along our property lines on Islay Hill, constructing the Spanish style monuments at the trail heads (still under construction, but soon to be finished when the custom ceramic tiles are completed), and working with City of SLO for improved trail head signage and swing gates for Islay Hill hikers.

Originally built by a wealthy Spaniard family in the early 70s, the La Lomita Ranch was an equestrian breeding facility of Arabian horses. When we purchased it from the second owners, the ranch had seen its better days and was in a serious state of disrepair. About two years ago, we purchased the west 94 acres of Islay Hill within the city limits from a local developer. We've combined these pieces into what is now a 254 acre ranch where you often see the cows grazing from Spanish Oaks area to Paragon Vineyards along Orcutt Rd, to the backside of Spanish Oaks, and down along the railroad tracks.

When we considered potential re-purposing aspects of La Lomita Ranch, and especially the 8 stall horse show barn which was its crown jewel structure, we began to see more value in sharing the beauty of this historic ranch with others, than we did filling it with more horses or planting the ranch to all vineyards. (There is already an additional, larger 22 stall barn still in use for our farm animals). With that idea in mind, we saw the best intended purpose for this uniquely 'horse shoe shaped' barn is for weddings, small fund raisers, and some horse training clinics in the nearby horse arena. We also have 4-H youth activities at the ranch in this area. By wanting to convert the 15x15 stalls into overnight stay rooms for the wedding party, it moved us into the 'B&B' permit process that we are now having to apply for. Needless to say, this has gotten much more complicated than originally planned because of these proposed eight converted rooms. Outside of them being remodeled, there is minimal new construction involved in this permit process: a 20x30 storage shed, and potentially a covered pavilion for horse events. The permit request is for up to 48 events/year (ie, small weddings, horse training clinics) under 225 people, and up to 4 events/year for under 400 people. (larger party weddings or fund raising events primarily). Nearly all these occasions would occur on a Saturday afternoon/evening. (FYI - Concerts and bands are clearly NOT something we're interested in at all, and have no plans

for whatsoever). Instead, we're focusing on showcasing the beauty of this historic ranch in a private, intimate, rural setting, and providing guests with an experience in a safe and unique venue that we intend to be one of the highest quality in the area.

There is no 'campground' in the intended use of this permit. Instead, because horse trailers sometimes have very small living quarters in the front of the trailers, some horse owners opt to sleep inside them to be near to their horse. That's what necessitated the need for the permit to allow 10 horse trailers to park on the ranch.

At first view of the notice mailed out by the county, we understand the initial concern by area residents. It would be difficult for us to address every technical concern and permit point in this letter, but I wanted to at least try and answer what I saw as the most commonly misconstrued pieces of info so far. However, we know there are more questions, so I invite you to ask questions of us by the following ways:

1. Emailing me directly – my email is on the Nextdoor App.
2. Calling me directly to ask specific questions if you'd like.
3. Come visit us! See the ranch and let us show you around. We think you'll be pleasantly surprised at what you see. What's in a permit application and what's on site can look very different.

Also, the link to the permit that also shows some pictures and lot of the technical info can be accessed at:

http://www.slocounty.ca.gov/Assets/PL/referrals/south+county/DRC2014-00134_VANDERHORST_CUP_Referral+Pkg.pdf

Your voices, questions, concerns can be better communicated in advance through a two way dialogue with us, rather than waiting to hear from county staff at a planning commission meeting. We hope we can answer many, if not all, of your questions in advance, and especially hear concerns you may have.

Sincerely,

Alan & Rebecca Vander Horst Family

La Lomita Ranch, SLO